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Ashville, Ohio

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FESTIVAL REVIEWS

Young Jimmy Rose's presentation of *Princess Morning* was unique among the shows given at the Puppeteer's Festival. The flimsy stock plot soon faded into insignificance before a barrage of ad-lib humor. Rose was ably assisted by a series of accidents to his equipment. Instead of being daunted by the accidents, Jimmy sat right on top of them. This was doubly funny to the audience of puppeteers, who constantly work to keep such things from happening.

Rose, at 15, is an accomplished puppeteer and comedian. No one who saw his show doubts that. The only criticism is that he drove past the point of saturation instead of stopping just short of it.

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Mimi Proctor gave her *Punch and Judy* with the same animation and vivacity that characterizes her person. As for the play, it was a watered down version of the original. But Mr. Punch still socked enough people to appeal to the same instinct that draws us to prize fights.

RUFUS AND MARGO ROSE'S "THE MOUSE IN NOAH'S ARK"

On Friday evening, July 1, the final public performance of the Tenth P. of A. Festival was presented under the direction of Rufus and Margo Rose, ably assisted by Jimmy and Bunny. "The Mouse in Noah's Ark," an original play by Martin Stevens, was an excellent choice for this final program of the festival.

The play itself is a clever one, containing some of that characteristic Stevens' wit and humor and presenting several technical problems which tax the skill of even the best puppeteer. For example, the frequent shifts in scale of observation is not an easy thing to accomplish without destroying the dramatic illusion. The Roses, however, did achieve it—from the scene in which Mrs. Noah appears "in the flesh" with the kittens frisking about her ankles, to the "puppet" Mrs. Noah in the closing scenes. Furthermore, the use of shadow figures for the grand procession of animals into the Ark is another touch that makes real demands upon the technical skill of the puppeteers.

The characterizations were fine, Elmer and Etta were properly mouse-like. Ella, the Pigmy elephant, captured our hearts at once, Tom's snarl was villainous indeed, and when that tail began to curl in devilish satisfaction, we could hardly restrain a few well-chosen hisses. Nor must we forget the playful kittens romping through their scene with glee.

The Marionette Carnival, which provided the second-half of the program, was a delightful note on which to close. The Carnival opened on a pattern of rhythmic gaiety with the dancing of Rufie's Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, the skillful tumbling of the two Oriental acrobats, and the skating of Sonja Heine. It remained for Togo the Clown, with his

teeter-tottering tables, however, to really bring the show to a pitch of excitement. Shall we ever forget that sniggering grin and gesture which only Togo can assume when he is concocting some new antic, Oscar, the trained seal, was for this reviewer the highlight of the carnival, and we could have sworn that we smelled those sardines (or was it salmon, Rufus?) and the odor of sawdust, popcorn and peanuts that are so intimately associated with the big top.

Thank you, Rufus, Margo, Jim, and Bun, for a pleasant evening!

WILLIAM CLEVELAND

"THE STRANGER" - A "ROUND" PUPPET-SHOW

There is a lack of self-consciousness in the Hartford Junior League productions which is refreshing. Hartford's "own" script had all the essential elements of theatre, a beginning, a middle and an end, together with suspense, action, compassion, and final triumph. It had a firm story line which was flexible enough to support all sorts of what might appear irrelevances. This script was exceptional, but a script need only be "one's own" for good or ill. Hartford's script was a part of its production. The character and figure of Puev—which was excellent, by the way, was a means to an end. Drawing from the audience emotions of despair, pity and delight were rightly his reason for being. Otherwise he should be in a glass case labeled: Do Not Touch. The audience was the most important element of this performance. It was flattering for audiences enjoy being trusted.

The plot line of this production was strong enough to bear welcome diversifications, all within the ultimate purpose. The days-of-the-week ballot was delightful in suggesting that a family of 28—or was it 128?—rabbits is more an organization than a family. Mamma Rabbit with her cultivated accents was obviously a good manager and found time for self-improvement. Pappa's banality and collapse at disaster were nice touches and to be expected, one supposes, in a production designed and executed by a group of firm minded Yankee females. Scenery, properties, and effects matched the less easily defined elements of the show. Hail, then, to Hartford, which yearly points out anew that it understands what a well rounded puppet show should be.

The prologue, for all its beauty was a trifle long, and connected with the rest of the drama by a most tenuous thread. It was beautiful but the rest of the show had beauty and much more. An eye-brow might be raised at the two-dimensional villain of the piece, the dog. He was of rather too ferocious mein and jostled the spectators somewhat. His absence in any visible form might have been advisable, with the audience supplying its own particular dog. The too fast pace of this particular

performance did not allow us to savor his defeat at Puev's -ahem!- hands. But altogether this was one of the "roundest" puppet shows one has seen.

JOHNNIE

I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET

THE GILMORES

If you've missed the last few Festivals - then you've missed meeting those vivacious Gilmores, a charming, handsome and talented family from Denver, Colorado. There's Mama Gilmore (Spence), Papa Gilmore (Alan), and Baby (well, College Sophomore, Ronny) Gilmore. At home you'll find their puppet theatre and workshop in the basement. Colorful hand puppets and marionettes, from productions past and present, line the walls. A rehearsal stage for Spence's one-woman show is permanently set up, and from time to time the neighborhood small fry are invited in to pass judgment on a new production.

It all goes back to the days when Spence went East to school. Some friends, who were studying occupational therapy, showed her a marionette they had made. She promptly took lessons from their teacher (who had been with Tony Sarg), and made a Russian dancer. Other marionettes followed for "The Three Wishes" and "The Dark Forest." The puppet activity ceased when Spence went to college. There she met Alan, and they were married. Then Ronny was born.

When Ronny grew up - the puppet interest came to life again. This time it was a family affair. Alan built the marionette stage, and Spence and Ronny (then in high school) played for children's parties. The business grew, but they began to wonder what would happen when Ronny left for college.

A solution came at the Puppetry Festival in St. Louis - the Gilmores' first. They saw Burr Tillstrom and Basil Milovsoroff give their magnificent "one-man" shows, and they knew then and there that hand puppets were the answer. To spur them on, they bid higher and higher at the Festival auction, until they were the owners of a pert little hand puppet, Koala Bear from Australia. Koala Bear is their prize possession, and has served as their model, but Spence adds, "Had it not been for the generosity of the puppeteers at the Festivals, and Prock's patient demonstration in our own workshop, the many puppets that followed just wouldn't have been."

Alan is the man behind the "one-man" show. He built the portable puppet booth, and the puppets. Spence gives the shows. Again the birthday party business boomed. Engagements followed at the Children's

Museum, Kiddieland at Elitch's Gardens, local department stores, and recently the puppets appeared in a television demonstration given by Video Associates.

"We use animals to a great extent in our shows," Spence explained. "Children love them, and they lend themselves beautifully to comedy. Sometimes we adapt fables and legends, such as "How The Chipmunk Got His Stripes", and "Wolf, Wolf"; other times we write our own little plays such as "The Toymaker and the Mischievous Mouse", "How the Dragon Got a Dime" and "How the Woodpecker Got His Hard, Hard Bill."

This fall the Gilmores did a propaganda show, instructing workers in the Community Chest Drive. With her first completely adult audience, Spence got her first real case of stage fright, but when the music started and the lights went on - everything was the same. The adult audience was delighted.

Spence explained her preference for a children's audience this way: "The birthday party shows which we love so well, can teach a person a lot about children's reactions, because the birthday child being — say a five year old — will have guests near that age, and at four, five and six, it is all so very real. The children go right along with you into the world of make believe. At ten they want to know how you do it. They are interested in the craft itself."

"But from two up to the 'teens' it is the same elements of comedy that make them laugh; the suspense—the surprise—some use of the familiar and some of the preposterous. The subtle blending of these with emphasis in the proper place—makes children laugh, but only by trial and error will you know which shows will be successful - which will be dropped or worked over."

"Koala, our first hand puppet, is still our master of ceremonies. He introduces the show; he talks with the children during the show, and as he says at the closing 'It has been a great pleasure to visit with you all today! and now goodbye, goodbye, goodbye! '"

UNDER THE BRIDGE

It's "Under the Bridge" now, but in Sept. three of VIVIAN MICHAEL'S fingers lost an argument with a vise. WALTON & O'ROURKE got next-to-top billing at the Hotel El Rancho Vegas on their seventh repeat this Fall. (Mike) DEITRICH & DIANE operated the Children's Theatre at the Chicago Railroad Fair. Nine and 10 shows a day for 14 weeks! As Rufus says "It takes young people." DON SAHLIN returned to Connecticut to work on a new show of his own. SHIRLEY O'DONNOL is

a student at Wittenberg College, Springfield, O. OLGA & MARTIN STEVENS rehearsed their new Christmas show and visited MARGO & RUFUS ROSE simultaneously. They visited BASIL MILOVSOROFF and family at their beautiful new home in Norwich, Vt. BASIL has just written and illustrated a new children's book based on his puppet show, "Grandma and The Little Grey Goat." Perfectly charming! KIT REIGHARD visited at the Roses. So did CARL HARMS who is working with LENNY SUIB this Christmas. The ROSE'S next production will be a musical comedy "The Ant and the Grasshopper", with music and lyrics by ERNIE WATSON, recorded on tape!

VIVIAN WOODWORTH of Rochester, visited the SUZARI studio in New York and caught Rumpelstiltskin rehearsing for TV. HELEN FARNUN of Minneapolis has a TV serial for her puppet "Golly Gopher", and helps plan the extensive KSTP-TV children's program. CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS, NYC, is building his first hand-puppet show since the war. CHARLOTTE ATKINSON, of Carman, Manitoba, Canada teaches hand-puppet courses for Leaders of Junior Church Groups largely following the plan of ALIC FOX, and recommends it heartily. She is sometimes assisted by ANN PATERSON. JOHN U. ZWEERS of Pasadena, is Director of Puppets at the Junior Museum of the Art Institute, and does big productions with children 8 to 13 years old. A recent show had a cast of 42 manipulators. Isn't that a record of some kind? THYRA & MEREDITH BIXBY, Saline, Mich., held open house in Sept. for the townspeople to meet the two young men who are trouping their show this year, MIKE SULLIVAN and LEO KELLEY. They're doing Pinnocchio. JERO MAGON gets around. This summer* he did a 5,000 mile, nine state tour of camps and resorts with a variety program, ably assisted by LENORE STEVENS & LEONARD COOPER. SPENCE GILMORE and company did a special show for the Community Chest in Denver. EMMA PETTEY of Dallas, our past Educational Advisor, says hello to all of you. AL WALLACE will have three Christmas store shows in New York and one in Montreal this year. AL has also shot a Christmas film since the Fest, and has two TV programs ready to go, in addition to being puppetry consultant for the Jr. League. Whew! BIL BAIRD'S latest film has to do with Elsie, the Cow. I pant to see it! Okay, you nice people - I've told you about them - now you tell me about YOU. Write it to Steve, Middlebury, Indiana.

NEWS ABROAD

George Bernard Shaw's tilt with Shakespeare on the stage of Waldo and Muriel Lanchester's marionette theatre during the Malvern Festival this summer was given a two-page spread in the London Illustrated, with a similar report in the New York Times. The ninety-three year

old playwright remarked that "This in all actuarial probability is my last play and the climax of my eminence, such as it is . . . I have learnt part of my craft from puppets. Their unvarying intensity of facial expression, impossible for the living actors, keeps the imagination of the spectators continuously stimulated." The ten minute scene reveals Shaw and Shakespeare going at each other with fisticuffs as well as words. When one is knocked down the other counts, "Hackety hackety one, hackety hackety two," etc. Walter Scott's Rob Roy appears and cuts off Macbeth's head, who exits cheerfully saying, "I will return to Stratford; the hotels are cheaper there." This bit of nonsense was given a good interpretation by a group of eminent actors including Russell Thorndike, who recorded the lines in London.

The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild held its annual exhibition at the Royal Hotel, London, October 1 to 12. For the occasion a 38 page program and catalogue was issued containing advertisements of puppet materials and supplies and a directory of 35 professional puppet showmen as well as a list of the exhibits and performances.

We recently received from the Czechoslovak Consulate General three issues of **Czechoslovak Film**. These laud the improvement in the cinema since it was "nationalized" in 1945. Now, it appears, the industry is "freed from the influence of previous years, years of private production." The goal is to encourage original national art and to make the film "the ideological teacher and fellow-fighter in the struggle for a better society." Cartoon and puppet films are prominent; their aim is "to popularize positive moral and ideological values and to foster the education of efficient and clear-minded citizens of our Republic." At the 1948 Film Biennial in Venice, the puppet film **Spalicek**, and adaptation of Czechoslovak folk customs and songs, won a Gold Medal. **The Revolt of the Toys** and **Lullaby** combine the techniques of puppet and ordinary films; both have won awards. **Misha the Bear** and **Ferda the Ant** (all about the world of insects and flowers) have been shown in Copenhagen. The full length puppet film **The Emperor's Nightingale** has music specially composed by Vaclav Trojan. Among the more recent productions is **The Story of the Contrabass** based on a story by A. P. Chekoov in which a lady hides herself in a bass viol. Another new film is an original story of Jiri Trnka (director of the puppet and cartoon films) and Jiri Brdecka called **The Song of the Prairie** with music by Jan Rychlik. This is a parody of the American Western with "the traditional characters of a brave cowboy and his delicate girl-friend threatened by a bandit."

Some of these films, if obtainable, would be stimulating for the next Festival, for they represent a high technical quality in puppets and backgrounds, and an imaginative approach.

— Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin

WASHINGTON IN TELEVISION

Washington Junior League's Marionette Committee has had two exciting and successful years in television with its children's show, starring Willie Butts, the goat comedian. The new techniques, the station's enthusiasm, and 2000 fan letters made us feel that all the hard work was well worth while.

Other groups planning to use puppets in television may find some helpful suggestions in our mistakes and successes. By experimenting, we found that recording the show, with the help of professional actors, was the best way for us to give a smooth performance. Making a record is simple, but time consuming. The cast studies the script; the director blocks out the action; special effects are tried and timed. After many rehearsals, a complete run through is timed with a stop watch. At last the final recording is made and the show is really on its way.

Popular demand seems to be for more animal characters, and for the same characters to appear in show after show. Every ounce of ingenuity is needed if you expect to stay on top with your "Hooper rating." No show can be better than its script. We found that action and dialogue should be incisive. Long speeches tend toward awkwardness. On the other hand speeches of one or two words are seldom effective.

Scenery should be simple. Too many details detract markedly from the action and plot. The number of characters in a play should be limited to four or five to avoid crowding the puppeteers. The range of the camera will further limit the action and playing area. Strings used for manipulating should be long enough, so that there is no danger of the operator's hand being televised.

Puppets need well defined features, even to the point of exaggeration. Skin texture should be smooth, but not glossy. The brilliant lights will soon show up any defects.

As yet, all the problems of television have not been solved. Some colors photograph well, others do not, depending upon the station's equipment. Costumes should contrast sharply against the backdrop. Varying color values, patterns, and textures help. We learned to paint the strings to make them as unobtrusive as possible.

Work with marionettes in television is fascinating, rewarding and most certainly a challenge to the wits; but we strongly advise any group to carefully consider the medium, before entering a field so different from stage shows and performances before small audiences. Television shows are exacting work.

— Mary Ann Walburn

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Junior

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Washington, D.C.

arry Burnett

Turnabout Theatre

Shaw vs. Shake

Lanchester Marionettes





Professor James J. Hayes has something new! The figures are operated by wires running from the hands down thru the body. Supported on a solid base which slides around on a board below the proscenium, he is able to operate 4 or 5 figures at once.

Rufus Rose inspects John Shirley's skater

Joe Owens & Joe, Jr. with Trick Marion





Widow and son from "The Story of Elijah"

HENRY W. AHRENS

P of A Festival
June 27-30



Western College - Oxford, Ohio



Otto Kunze's marionettes at Dept. Store window in N. Y. Corsets. This scene shows a man showing a small child into a lady waiting for a si-



The Three Kings follow the star of Bethlehem singing "We Three Kings of Orient are" marionettes are by Helen Galt of Long



The Gilmores

Scene (Top) with the Toy Maker and the Mischievous



...ettes appeared in five of the McCreery's
...s in N. Y., advertising Warner Brothers
...s she shows an artist's studio in 1889. The
...of the Christian Herald has come to protest an
...d child squirting water on a rust-proof
...res, the editor opens the wrong door, bumps
...ting for a sitting. She turns her head.

...e Star of Bethlehem to the manger,
...officient are." The eighteen inch
...d of Long Beach, California



(Above) Skater, from the Variety Show
of Mrs. Ellsworth Jaeger, Buffalo, NY.
Mrs. Jaeger performs on an open stage,
assisted by Loretta Hinkson.

(Below) Hazelle Rollins and her Talk-
ing Clown.

Stilletto - The Great!



Fig. A

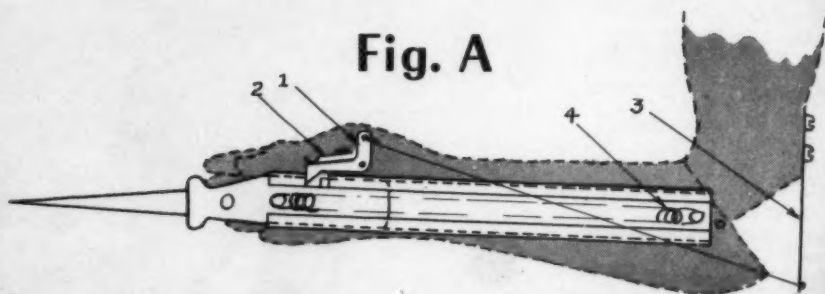
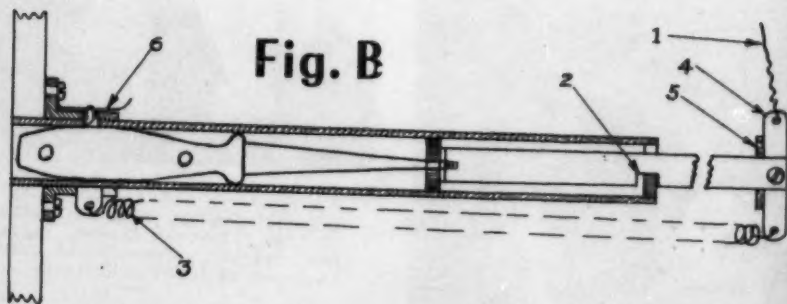


Fig. B





An embarrassing moment from "GOOBER IS MY NAME"

Wallace Puppets

MUSTAPHA, snake charmer by Esther L. Cheatle



Elaine Vavrinek's Dancing Ostrich





Schools



Clarie Zeidelman has been the guiding light of the Marionette Club at Penn Treaty Jr. High for 10 years. Last February they were invited to appear with the Philadelphia Orchestra at a children's concert. The group of 30 boys and girls meets twice a week. Plays staging, etc. are by Miss Zeidelman. Above is a scene from Russian Melody.

Robert E. Lee & Tess - Variety Show by the Placer College Puppet Club, Auburn, Cal. Kathro Frank, sponsor.

"Timmy" entertains the children at the Library in Raleigh, N.C. Miss Barnett Spratt.



TRICK PUPPETS

KNIFE THROWER

(SEE PICTURE PAGE)

Stilletto throws knives at Suzy! Don't worry, it's all part of the act concocted by Joe Owens. Suzy hasn't had a scratch, because Stilletto's aim is perfect. Here's how.

The "Board" against which Suzy stands is made of $\frac{1}{4}$ " plywood. It is covered with blue velvet, box pleated to conceal the knife openings. Eight knives are mounted in detachable tubes on the back side of the "Board". The knives are arranged so that they appear to be "thrown" on each side of Suzy's head, arms, waist and knees. A ninth one, near her head, does not stick. Being "dull", it falls to the floor. Stilletto throws another.

Stilletto has a rectangular tube in his right fore arm, in which the knife he "throws" slides. The knife is spring loaded in the "up" or concealed position and is latched down in his hand when he is ready to throw it. The latch is tripped by bending his elbow at right angles; the knife disappears up his arm before the eye can follow. After he "throws" one knife, he reaches into a basket (placed on a small stand downstage) and picks up another knife. Concealed in the bottom of the basket and running down into the base of the stand is a solenoid coil which pulls the steel knife back down his arm and latches it. When his hand comes out of the basket, he is holding "another" knife.

STILLETTO'S ARM OPERATES AS FOLLOWS:

When the solenoid magnet in the basket is energized, it pulls the steel knife into the latched position as shown in Fig. A. It is held in this position by a latch (1) held into a notch in one edge of knife bar by a leaf spring (2). This latch is connected by a small steel wire to a bronze leaf spring (3) fastened to Stilletto's upper arm and extending below his elbow joint. Its length is adjusted so that when his forearm is brought slightly past a right angle at the elbow, the wire trips the latch and spring (4) snaps knife up his arm out of sight. A thin metal cover for the inner side of his fore arm conceals the latch and keep the spring from getting caught in his clothing.

A cross section taken longitudinally through a knife tube is shown in Fig. B. The knife is shown in the concealed or loaded position behind the knife board.

OPERATION IS AS FOLLOWS:

At the instant the knife in Stilletto's hand disappears up his arm, the puppeteer operating the knife board pulls string (1) which is attached to end of a knife bar raising the knife bar upward allowing the notch

(2) to disengage from the slot in the end of the knife tube. Spring (3) under tension pulls knife forward rapidly, handle first, thru the front of the board, until stopped by cross member (4) striking the back end of tube. Knife moves forward a distance to show handle and all but $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the blade, which is left "sticking into" the board. A piece of thick, soft leather (5) acts as a deadening stop to prevent a metallic noise. It sounds as if the knife blade had really stuck into the board. The handle of the knife is heavy, and the blade thin (.020"). When knife stops in forward position, it quivers realistically.

P OF A NOTICES

A limited number of the 48-49 GRAPEVINES are still available, at 35c a copy plus postage. Dec. '48, Feb. '49, April '49, and June '49. Order from: Lem Williams, 2077 Lincoln Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota.

The following Manuscript Puppet Plays may be borrowed from the Puppeteers of America Library, simply by sending a request with postage to: P of A Library, Lem Williams, 2077 Lincoln Ave., St. Paul, Minnesota.

Blickel, Peg	"The Biggest Fraud"
Haberl, Sister Marie Anthony	"This Way to the Sky"
Horwitz, Julius	"Mrs. O'Connor's Hope"
Lord, Daniel	"Rainbow Gold"
Naskin, Shirley-Guralnik, David	"The Firebird"
Rowson, R. C.	"The Lion and the Mouse"
Spencer, Mrs. Thelma	"The Invalid"
Walsworth, Bertha L.	"The Erudite Octopus"
Winnemore, Helen	"St. Helena Leaves Her Niche"
Zolin, Annette	"The Jelly Bean Fantasy"

PUPPETS GO TO THE FAIR

The New York Times Third Annual Boys' and Girls' Book Fair held at The American Museum of Natural History in New York City, No. 18-21 rivaled the P of A Festival with its diversified program of Puppets.

Basil Milovsoroff's Rod Puppets in "The Fox and the Grapes" opened the program on Friday and continued with three performances during the day. Basil's beautifully designed puppets have that artistic quality which seems so much a part of the folk lore that he presents.

Also on the Friday program were Rufus and Margo Rose and their inimitable "Marionettes in Action", . . . three shows, . . . "each one finer than the other" quoted a critical observer.

Saturday morning, Gayle and Doug Anderson put away their puppets long enough to give three magic performances with Kimo, their white rabbit, stealing the show as he appeared and disappeared at command. John Begg's Ballet Miniatures; "Marionettes", "The Knave of Hearts" and "The Three Bears" were a part of the Saturday program.

Sunday, Tigor Nagy's Marionette Co. gave three performances of "The Frog Prince." Monday, the Sue Hasting's Marionettes presented "Winnie the Pooh" with special permission of Stephan Slesinger, in three performances.

A most impressive list of illustrators of childrens' books, and a wide variety of Childrens Theatre Companies contributed to the fair, which, in three days, played to over 100,000 children.

PUPPETRY IN EDUCATION.

A STOCK SET OF PUPPETS

Are you a teacher, librarian or group leader who would just love to give a lot of puppet plays, but can never quite find the time and energy to build a new set of puppets each time? I have had so many S O S's from folks who are in that predicament that I think the problem merits some discussion. In fact, I have been in that classification so long myself that I have spent endless hours mulling over the problem and trying to arrive at a workable solution. I believe the following should solve the problem.

My theory is based upon the building of a stock set of puppet characters. If you will examine the folk and fairy lore that is the basis for most puppet shows for children, you will find that much of it is based upon practically the same set of characters. They vary only in interpretation of character. Take your favorite fairy stories and see how nearly the following characters could portray the story.

First, a little boy and girl, preferably the peasant type, a sort of combination of costume . . . no particular nationality; then the father and mother, also the peasant type, and you will have the average folk tale family completed. The mother can be the doting mother of "Jack and the Beanstalk" or the wicked stepmother of "Cinderella", depending entirely upon the operator's interpretation. She may double for "Red Riding Hood's" grandmother. A shawl or a cape or a bonnet will make a world of difference and go a long way toward changing the character. The boy and girl may start as Hansel and Gertel and end up as Jack and Red Riding Hood. Get a list of stories and see how far even this simple cast will carry you.

Next, I'd add a witch and a fairy. not only will this complete the cast of many stories, but it will give you the basic characters for stories that you may wish to write. Add to these a King, a Queen and a Princess, or if time presses too greatly, a crown and a royal robe on Mother and Father may answer the purpose, and you have added literally scores of stories to your list. I'd like to have a dog, a wolf and a sleepy old bear but these can be added as time goes on, and the necessity arises. A couple of gnomes or elves will add considerable color to many of the tales and should be considered for the cast. They are also valuable as emcees, etc. I think this type of cast particularly suited to librarians who are called upon to do weekly or monthly programs. Such a cast in an elementary school would certainly permit all pupils from first to seventh grade to interpret their favorite stories. It would also be a boon to the amateur who specializes in childrens' parties and who must repeat before the same groups.

Incidental puppets or effects that require almost no time . . . ghosts that are little more than a white cloth on a stick . . . silhouette puppets . . . in our own case just now a snow man . . . three circles of card board nailed to a stick and covered with artificial snow, a Hollowe'en pumpkin from the 10 cent store plus a little green oilcloth, all products of your own ingenuity will add that variety that you need for a particular show.

I think we all stress MAKING puppets too much. After all, the puppet is an actor, and with him, "he plays the thing." It always irks me to put a lot of work on a puppet that can only be used once. Puppets, like actors improve with acting, so give them a chance. I've never seen a child audience that did not respond to an old familiar puppet face.

I don't mean for a minute that such a cast will carry you forever, but it will serve as a basis, and the few simple additions you will have to make for each new performance will never equal the drudgery of starting from scratch.

Vivian Michael

VOICE PRODUCTION

BY MARTIN STEVENS

Actors don't "live their parts." They act them. You aren't the character - you just act like him. How? This way:

They say of an actor, "He was so natural." He was not. He was artificial. (Webster: artificial. Opposed to natural; made or contrived by art).

He seemed natural because of his art.

(Don't let the word "art" throw you. Webster says: art. Skill in performance, acquired by experience and observation).

He seemed natural because:

A: He knew how the character felt.

B: He knew how to speak.

C: He knew how to behave onstage.

How can you get these skills? "Know-how" and practice. These instructions are "know-how." Practice is up to you. The voices you admire are practiced. Here's how:

A:

Know How The Character Feels.

A "part" in a play is just that; part of the whole play. First understand the play. Do you know what it's about?

Now, what does your character mean to the play? Who is he? Why is he there? How does he feel about it? You don't know? Remember a time in your own life when you were in a spot like he's in. Now you know how he feels. By recalling that feeling of your own, and using it to color his words and actions, you make him feel natural.

B:

Know How To Speak.

This is at least half of your equipment. How does it work? Your voice works like a fiddle, only better. You breath (the fiddle bow) vibrates your vocal cords (the strings) which "re-sound" in your face bones (the fiddle).

Hum, lightly touching your front teeth together. Feel them vibrate? Take hold of the bridge of your nose, and hum loudly. Feel it vibrate? That's where your voice is in your mouth and sinuses, not in your throat. You can hum high and low by just wishing to, without a conscious muscular effort. That's automatic. Forget your throat.

Hum, opening your mouth a little so the sound comes through it. Sounds like "huh", doesn't it? A fiddle can do that much. But you **make** words by shaping that "huh" into vowels and pinching them off into consonants, with your tongue and lips.

Vowels are sounds you make with your mouth open. (e, a, o, u, etc.)

Consonants are sounds you make by shutting off or interfering with the vowels. (m, p, k, etc.)

Vowels can be loud. (Yell "hay!" and you'll be heard a block away.) Consonants can't be loud. (Try to yell "psst".)

The wider you open your mouth the better your vowels can be heard. Some vowels can be heard better (and said more easily) than others. Practice saying these strong, easy vowel sounds (before a mirror, to see that you open your mouth) so you'll always be heard:

Hold the tip of your tongue firmly down behind your lower front teeth. Say "Meee" and think of being pleased.

Say "May" and smile.

Say "Mah" so relaxed you'll probably yawn.

Say "Mo" thinking of a round hole. Be sure to shape your lips into *orte*.

Say "Mooo" like a cow. Shove that round hole of your lips forward to do this.

Where was the tip of your tongue during that? That's right: Keep it firmly down behind your lower front teeth on vowels. Say these vowels over often, making each distinct from the other. Your speech rides on them.

Remember when you practice these vowels: your voice is upstairs. If your throat gets tired, you're doing it wrong.

Unfortunately, you can be heard without being understood. Consonants are partitions between vowels that make them into understandable words. Make them distinct. Particularly the ones on the *ends* of words. Use them, and you can be understood all over the auditorium in a whisper. Ignore them, and you may bellow your head off without making sense.

To "act" with your voice, you must get lots of air into you quickly, and control how it comes out in your voice. Don't swell up your chest like Superman. That's good for health, bad for speech. Suck in a deep bellyful of air, making your belly stick out. Now slowly - slowly let the air out. Slower than that. Feel your muscles down there pulling back into shape? Those muscles (diaphragm to you) control your breath. They need exercise. Do this:

Take air in deep and *quick*; let it out slow. Do this every time you think. Take a quick bellyful of air; now say the Lord's Prayer - all of it - on that one breath. You can't say it all? Then practice it often, every day. Take another breath. Say "Hah!" sharply. Bark it! Punch out a row of "Ha ha ha ha!" Alternate doing this with saying the prayer on one breath. Many times every day. You are controlling your breath. Now you have the machinery of making sound. What are you going to sound like?

Train your ear to *hear* voices by consciously listening to them. Describe to yourself how one voice differs from another: your friend, your relative; Bergman and Hepburn; Skelton & Hope; Karloff & Lorre. Listen to them. Now imitate them. Listen to yourself say part of the Lord's Prayer. Remember how you sounded. Now say that part again, exactly as you said it before. Did you hit it? Now say it a different way; remember it; repeat it. Did you do it? Think of something else for five minutes. Now recall how you sounded, and say it again that way. You hit it? Swell! You are now controlling your speech.

Take every opportunity to sing, breathing deep in your belly, and opening your mouth as wide as you can and still shape the vowels.

Now make your voice "act" like that of the character you're pretending to be.

Don't Recite

"Recite" means to repeat, but your character is supposed to think these things up as he goes along. Monotony is a deadly sin. Be interested in what you are saying. Appear to **think** your way through your speech talking louder and faster doesn't cure monotony. Understand your speech and emphasize those words that actually tell what the speech is about. Don't throw away the end of the speech; let us hear the last syllable of the last word, **clearly**.

Now you can decide how the character should sound, and make him sound that way, dependably, every time. If you get tired or ache, you haven't followed the above carefully, for this is the way of **easy effort**.

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The following books may be borrowed from the P of A Library by sending postage to:

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Batchelder, Marjorie

Bufano, Remo

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Fisher, Douglas

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Columbus, Ohio Puppetry Guild Shadow Puppets

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"Magic Strings"

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"Marionettes Teach Them"

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NORTHSIDE CHICAGO PUPPETEERS

On August 20, the northside Chicago Puppeteers made their annual trek to the E. N. (Nick) Nelson cottage at Coloma, Michigan. After a picnic lunch, Nelson opened the show with an old-time version of Punch. Joe Moress announced the acts as a villainous Pancho. Esther Hixson delighted her audience with a slow-moving rhumba gal showing nice foot-work and hip movements of Hixson construction. Gus Rapp exhibited his line of Punch figures and staged a magic act. Plans were outlined for programs to come at the Hill home in Chicago where the permanent puppet theatre is maintained.

P OF A MEMBERSHIP

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